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AUTHOR Salveson, Paul; And Others
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ABSTRACT

Gateway to Learning is a British government initiative that aims to provide new guidance opportunities for adults through a voucher system. In Leeds (England), Gateway to Learning services are targeted toward the following groups: long-term unemployed; short-term unemployed; people facing redundancy; and Asian communities. The program's effectiveness was evaluated by interviewing a sample of 154 individuals (57% female, 23% Asian, 81% unemployed) eligible for Gateway services. Of those interviewed, 110 individuals had used Gateway services and 44 (28%) had not. Many unemployed Gateway clients expressed very positive views and considered it better than services such as job clubs. Respondents with learning difficulties and individuals from professional/managerial backgrounds felt that targeted provision would be helpful. Respondents learned about Gateway to Learning from both formal and informal sources, and approximately half wanted general educational and career counseling. The Gateway card/voucher caused a high level of confusion and some antagonism; however, a substantial minority of respondents felt that the card gave them a sense of belonging and self-confidence in confronting "the system." Many respondents felt that Gateway guidance had changed their horizons, and 75% said they would use the service again. Eleven recommendations for improving the program were presented. (MN)

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Department of Adult Continuing Education

Gateway to Learning: empowering individuals?

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Paul Salveson
Kevin Ward
Miriam Zukas

May 1994

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Paul Salveson
Kevin Ward
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Preface

In 1993, the Department of Adult Continuing Education (DACE) at the University of Leeds was asked by Leeds Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and Leeds and Bradford City Action Team (CAT) to carry out a research project and produce a report on 'the empowerment of individuals through voucher mechanisms'. The project began in September 1993 and this is the resulting report. The project is one part of the evaluation of the Leeds Training and Enterprise Council's Gateway to Learning (GTL) pilot project. A broader evaluation of the scheme is also being undertaken by Replan '91.

Most of the research has involved detailed discussions with people who are registered as Gateway to Learning clients in the city of Leeds. Most have used the service, though we spoke to some who, for various reasons, had not.

We have included, within the main body of the report, a number of case studies from our research. They represent a range of examples from people's experiences of Gateway to Learning. These are factual accounts, using quotes from clients in our interviews with them. To preserve confidentiality we have only given the first name of each person, and in some cases, their age and area in which they live.

A summary accompanies this report.

Acknowledgements

During the course of our research we were given every assistance by officers of Leeds TEC and City Action Team, and by guidance providers' staff. We are very grateful for all the help which they gave, and we sincerely hope that this report is seen as being of value in their on-going guidance work.

Above all we must thank the Gateway to Learning clients who responded so positively to our research, and welcomed us into their homes. For the many warm and honest discussions, many thanks to all of you. We hope this report genuinely represents your experience and 'tells it how it is'.

Executive summary

1. Overview of the research

154 people were interviewed. 57% were female and 43% male; 23% were Asian and 81% unemployed. Many unemployed people expressed very positive views of Gateway to Learning, particularly when compared with other services such as Job Clubs. Respondents with learning difficulties, and others from professional and managerial backgrounds, felt that targeted provision would be helpful. Some Asian people felt that language support was particularly important.

Recommendation 1

Gateway should continue to have long-term unemployed people as its main target group, and the specific needs of groups within this category, including people with learning difficulties, people from professional and managerial backgrounds, and Asian people should be specifically addressed. The needs of low-paid, possibly part-time, individuals should also be catered for.

2. Information about Gateway to Learning

Respondents learnt about Gateway to Learning from both formal sources (for example, Job Centres) and informal sources (for example, community centres, outreach, friends, etc).

Recommendation 2

Gateway needs a regular flow of publicity both for clients and statutory and community agencies in Leeds. Publicity aimed at potential clients should be clear, and allow people to relate to it in terms of their own experience and needs. Outreach work should be an important part of providers' briefs.

3. Why use Gateway?

Approximately half the respondents wanted general educational and career counselling. Other respondents wanted specific information on courses which were available but this group also needed considerable support from guidance workers to achieve their aims. The most popular subject areas were word processing and computer skills, followed by childcare and nursery teaching. Other interests included electronics, youth and community work and counselling.

4. The Information Pack

Many people found the pack uninformative and confusing. 75% of respondents claimed that the pack had not helped them choose a guidance centre. 62% did not regard the card/voucher as an important part of the pack. Newspaper advertisements were seen by some as more informative about Gateway than the pack itself.

Recommendation 3

A redesign of the pack is necessary in order to address criticisms that it does not explain adequately what Gateway is about. Gateway users and providers should be involved in a small project group to prepare a redesigned draft.

Recommendation 4

The method of distributing the pack should be reassessed, so that clients get the information as soon as they make contact with the service, whether by freephone, or by turning up at the guidance centre.

5. The Card /Voucher

As we found with the information pack, there was a high level of confusion, and a certain antagonism, towards the card. 39% of respondents were not sure what the card was for. However, a substantial minority did feel that the card give them a sense of belonging to something, giving them a right to use the service. Many were Asian clients. For some, albeit a minority, the card gave a degree of self-confidence in confronting 'the system', however welcoming the system was trying to be.

Recommendation 5

The card should be reconsidered as part of a review of the Gateway pack, with the aim of making the card a more tangible part of the service. A small amount of additional information, including a freephone contact, should be on the card. The expiry date should be dispensed with.

6. Choosing a guidance centre

Most people chose the guidance centre which was nearest to them, though a minority were prepared to go anywhere in Leeds providing the centre provided specialist support. Many long-term unemployed clients welcomed the fact that there was a locally-based centre, and indicated clearly that they did not want to go the city centre unless they had to. This was on grounds of cost, inconvenience, and unfamiliarity.

Whilst many people did not already know about their local centre, the fact that it was local, and not a large city centre institution, encouraged them to use the service.

The availability of childcare was viewed as essential by a substantial number of people, and language support was viewed as important for some Asian clients. Many people said they felt childcare, language support, braille and signing were important facilities to have, but did not apply to them. Their availability did, however, show the service in a positive, friendly light and encouraged people to use Gateway.

Some people deliberately chose a centre which was not tied into its own training or educational provision, in order to get what they saw as an 'objective' service.

Recommendation 6

Future development of Gateway centres should aim at providing an even geographical spread around the city, with most attention directed at areas of high unemployment. Centres should be easily accessible by public transport.

Recommendation 7

Regular reviews of 'customer care' should be made of each guidance centre, both by centres themselves and the TEC. This should cover times taken to answer the phone, staff skills in customer care, the physical appearance of reception areas, and the rooms in which guidance sessions are held.

Recommendation 8

If a centre advertises itself as being open for a particular period of the day, there should always be someone able to answer calls and make appointments during that period.

Recommendation 9

Childcare facilities should be available at all local guidance centres, and at a substantial number of city centre locations. Language support and good access for physically disabled people should be available at key Gateway centres.

7. Using the Gateway Services

24% of respondents used the service more than once (for more in-depth guidance) and many appreciative comments were made about the informal, supportive culture of Gateway. However, we found only four people who had 'moved on' to a different guidance centre, perhaps for more specialised guidance. This seemed very low, suggesting that there was a danger of dependency on a particular centre/worker once people had made the first step of using the service.

8. Before and after guidance

A substantial proportion of our sample felt that their horizons had changed as a result of Gateway guidance. Whilst bearing in mind that some clients had simple and straightforward requests for information, a large number still said that they had become more aware of their skills and abilities,

and educational and employment potential. The people who expressed interest in counselling work, or youth and community activity, were all from non-professional backgrounds. Many of these were Asian and had a strong desire to work in their own community in some capacity or other. Two were ex-offenders who wanted to do counselling work either in prisons or with ex-offenders. A very large number of people who had few, if any, formal educational qualifications wanted to get into higher education with a view to some form of community-related job. The guidance process helped them to realise that it was achievable and realistic for them to aim towards this.

The vast majority of people we saw were doing something different, to some degree or other as a result of Gateway. Gateway itself was often one element within a major change taking place in people's lives, though it would be fair to say it was often the decisive element in helping people to change their situation.

9. Continuing support needs

75% of respondents who had used Gateway stated that they might need guidance again in the future.

Recommendation 10

Resources should be made available for a city-wide Gateway magazine, aimed at existing or potential users, to keep them informed of current developments in the service and of training and educational provision, including grants, in the city.

Recommendation 11

Providers should identify clients who may need follow-up and on-going support. This may require staff resources devoted to such client support.

12. General responses

We asked people for general comments on Gateway and these were mostly very positive indeed. A lot of people had already recommended the service to friends and relatives. In most cases, people recommended that friends just turn up at the centre, or alternatively ring up. However, the availability of guidance staff on a fairly ad hoc basis at South Leeds was clearly important to people who disliked the 'appointments' system, or who did not have access to a phone.

1. Introduction

Gateway to Learning is a central government initiative, through the Employment Department, which aims to provide new guidance opportunities for adults. This is the second year in which a number of pilot schemes have been launched in different parts of the country. In each case the local Gateway project has been managed by a Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). Some features of Gateway are common to all pilot schemes, although there is quite considerable scope for adapting to local circumstances. For example, each Gateway pilot is expected to identify 'target groups' for whom Gateway services will be aimed, although it is largely up to the local TEC to decide precisely which groups in the community will be thus targeted. In the case of Leeds, the original target groups agreed by the TEC were a) long term unemployed; b) short-term unemployed; c) people facing redundancy; and d) Asian communities.

A common feature of Gateway pilots is the use of voucher systems to provide access to Gateway services. While most, if not all schemes, make use of plastic cards to function as 'vouchers', some pilot schemes inscribe a monetary value on the cards, roughly equivalent to the cost of one hour's guidance. Typically, a member of one of the target groups would present their voucher/card at a Gateway centre and be provided with approximately one hour's worth of guidance, effectively 'cashing in' the voucher. The cost of that particular guidance session would then be 'redeemed' by the provider making a claim to the local TEC. In the case of Leeds Gateway, the system is slightly different. The plastic cards do not show any monetary value: only the person's name, and an identity number. The card may be used as many times as the client desires, although the card does indicate an expiry date. However, the card may be renewed after the expiry date.

One of the main purposes of the research, at least initially, was to evaluate how effective the card/voucher system was in 'empowering' individuals. This was taken to mean giving people in the target groups a sense of control or power in both choosing a particular guidance provider and making use of guidance services. A key theme in Gateway nationally was the idea of extending the market for adult guidance. By creating a greater number of providers, and then giving potential clients access to this enlarged market through information packs and vouchers, this would, so the argument runs, empower individuals who previously had little knowledge of the range of guidance services; the voucher/card would be part of the empowerment process whereby people could choose a range of providers in their town or city, rather than being dependent on one traditional guidance provider, whoever that might be. The guidance centres themselves were expected to give unbiased advice about opportunities available to clients, rather than favouring their own institution.

In Leeds, there were, initially, 15 providers within the Gateway network including colleges and universities, City Council guidance services (at first only in South Leeds, and the Opportunities Centre in the city centre, but later in east Leeds) as well as some private providers. Several of these were new to guidance, whereas others (notably colleges and universities) had provided a long-standing guidance service, but usually mainly aimed at their own institution. Gateway involved a major cultural change for existing providers insofar as they were expected to provide guidance about opportunities which might be available in other centres. It was also a major task training new

staff in guidance centres and institutions which were completely new to the concept of adult guidance.
While a majority of the guidance centres provided services to all members of the four target groups, and in many cases a free service to other Leeds city residents, the exception was the South Leeds guidance centre based at Tunstall Road Community Centre. This particular project was financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) and was specifically ear-marked for long-term unemployed people. Considerable resources in terms of staff and publicity were put into the South Leeds Guidance Service, and the facilities came on stream in advance of other Gateway centres in Leeds.

The Leeds Gateway to Learning project involved the marketing of a city-wide guidance service, which was done through newspaper advertising, local radio and targeted publicity in community centres, libraries and job centres. It was assumed that a large number of Gateway clients would come to the service through use of a free phone service, staffed by South Leeds Guidance Service. The potential client, providing he or she was in one of the target groups, would then be sent an information pack which included the card/voucher. The pack contained explanatory material about Gateway and a list of the providers, showing what facilities they had (eg creche, disabled access, etc) and when they were open. The potential client would then exercise their own judgement in deciding which guidance centre to use. He or she would ring up their prospective centre, or call in, and make an appointment. In fact, most Gateway clients in the first months of the scheme were recruited by outreach work in the South Leeds area, creating a number of difficulties with the pack, which we detail in the report.

In 1993, the University of Leeds Department of Adult Continuing Education (DACE) was commissioned by Leeds TEC and Leeds and Bradford City Action Team (CAT) to consider issues of 'empowerment' of individuals through voucher mechanisms. This was to be achieved by interviewing a random sample of Gateway clients, including those who had been registered (that is, had received a pack) but had not used the service. It was initially proposed to do this by a combination of personal interviews and postal questionnaires. A draft questionnaire was produced but, after discussion with the TEC and Gateway providers, it was decided that a postal questionnaire would present serious difficulties for several reasons: its length, the unfamiliarity of clients with the concept of 'Gateway', and the varying degrees of literacy among Gateway clients. The client group ranged from people who had very little English to people with high level professional qualifications. A postal questionnaire would also have inhibited in-depth discussion which was felt to be an important part of the survey. In our interviews, we found that people were prepared to explore aspects of guidance which no questionnaire could possibly have allowed for. We were able to record these discussions as they took place, and several are reproduced as extended quotes or case studies in the report.

The research project was managed by a group comprising representatives of Leeds TEC and Leeds and Bradford CAT, together with the DACE staff research team. The questionnaire was designed through discussions with the TEC, CAT, Gateway providers and colleagues in DACE. We produced a draft which was piloted with some Gateway clients, amended and then further amended following interviews with five clients. The majority of people were interviewed face-to-face. A few others were interviewed by telephone. As the team were aware of gender issues and the main researcher was male, it was decided to use female interviewers for as many Asian women as

possible, and for white/European women who requested a female interviewer.
In the early stages of the study, we sent a letter to all Gateway clients (then 327 individuals), informing them about the project and asking whether or not they wished to be interviewed. We enclosed a pre-paid envelope and reply slip. A total of 70 people sent the form back saying they did not wish to be interviewed; 32 individuals indicated that they would like to be interviewed. We suspect that those who did not wish to be interviewed were suspicious about 'official' intrusion and possibly uncertain about what 'Gateway' actually was. Naturally, we respected the wishes of those who did not want to be interviewed, and arranged to see all those who did. The number of Gateway clients expanded considerably after this initial survey, and we simply contacted new people at random. We rang people up if they were on the phone, explained what we were doing, and encountered no negative reaction. Where people were not on the phone, we called and talked to them on the doorstep, arranging to come round when it was convenient.

Most interviews were held in people's homes. In several cases we saw individuals in community centres, such as Tunstall Road or the Opportunities Centre.

It should be noted that certain aspects of Gateway to Learning in Leeds have been modified during the course of our research. The target group categories have been relaxed, and Gateway to Learning is open to all Leeds residents, although the South Leeds centre caters solely for long-term unemployed people, due to ESF funding requirements.

We found ourselves being asked, or obliged, to intervene in some individual cases. In a very small number of cases there had been a problem with the guidance people had received, and we relayed this information to the TEC who responded accordingly. In most cases we tried to assist people who had particular difficulties with some of the follow-on activities resulting from Gateway guidance. Sometimes this involved liaising with the guidance provider, or with the TEC. We suspect that some of those we interviewed who had not used the service were encouraged to do so following a discussion about Gateway, which may have helped them realise what the service was about.

2. The client sample

This section is intended to give a breakdown of the numbers of people we spoke to, and their particular circumstances and backgrounds.

A total of 154 individuals were interviewed,. We spoke to three people more than once, making an actual total of 157 interviews. The interviews were usually carried out face to face, although in some cases, individuals were interviewed by telephone. The names of respondents were chosen from lists supplied by Leeds TEC. We sought to achieve a reasonable balance based on age and gender, and on the basis of the Leeds TEC target groups (see below). Sixty six interviewees were male and 88 were female. These included 9 Asian men and 27 Asian women. Of those interviewed, 110 had sought guidance.

Michael, Leeds 15

Michael had been working as a teacher for some years and voluntarily resigned in September 1993. He was unemployed for three months before contacting Gateway. 'I was going through what you'd call a 'mid-life crisis'. I wanted to make a major reappraisal of my life.' He was interested in a range of possibilities, focusing on guidance and advice work.

'I had been looking around in the wilderness. Gateway to Learning gave me something to get a handle on. It's very exasperating getting good advice if you're over 21!'. Michael had an initial chat with people at the Opportunities Centre who recommended Leeds Metropolitan University for more detailed help. The pack had not been much help.
He was pleased with the guidance he got at LMU. 'Phil talked my language; it was a really important meeting for me.' Michael has had a number of guidance sessions with LMU and has used the JiigCal psychometric testing. 'I've become more knowledgeable; we've filtered through various options that's the name of the game, isn't it?' Michael used the action plan devised by LMU to help him plan his progress.

After looking at options, Michael identified counselling as his favoured choice. He has applied to do the Diploma in Careers Guidance at Huddersfield University, and is looking at the possibility of 'work shadowing' with someone in adult guidance.

'I feel a lot more confident and aware of my abilities. The service has helped me come to terms with what I'm doing in my life..'

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John, Leeds 11

John is 52 and has been unemployed for two years. He was beginning to give up hope 'because of my age'. he heard about Gateway through the Job Plan workshop at Eastgate. 'I went down to Tunstall Road and saw Jane. It was good having it recommended to me.'

John wasn't sure what the card was for and had already had his first interview before the pack arrived. He has used the service twice, and through this has got onto a Warehousing and Distribution course at Sweet Street training centre.

'I'm highly satisfied with the service. The people were genuinely interested and wanted to help.' John has already recommended the service to his friends. 'It has helped me considerably, though I'm still a bit vague about what gateway to Learning really is. However, I've nothing but positive things to say about the service I have had. It's the one thing that offers a package to an individual. For me, it's been a process of realisation.'

Barry, Crossgates

Barry is 50 and has worked for twelve years as a publican. He has been unemployed for a few months and a friend told him about Gateway. He rang the freephone and arranged to go to Tunstall Road. 'I had no idea what I wanted to do. I just wanted to make a start and see what was around. One possibility was coach driving.' Barry did the psychometric testing and various ideas came up. One was painting and decorating. As a result he is starting a painting and decorating course at a local college. 'Gateway is a very good idea. It put me onto something that I wouldn't have thought of on my own, but I'm really keen on doing.'

The four categories adopted to identify target groups were people facing redundancy, Asian people, short-term unemployed and long-term unemployed. A fifth category 'others' included people in part-time work, self-employed, at college, or other circumstances. This was not a target group, but simply a general category.

Six people were interviewed who were facing redundancy, and 36 Asian people. We saw 20 short-term unemployed and 85 long-term unemployed, and seven'others'. It should be noted that most of the Asian interviewees were long-term unemployed, or unemployed but not registered.

The great majority of the individuals seen in the first three months of the study who had sought guidance were clients of the South Leeds Guidance Centre, which started its 'Gateway' service before most of other centres began operating. In the later stages of the study more clients who had used other centres were seen. The actual numbers seen from different providers are shown in Table 1. This does not reflect the total number of interviews, since 44 people we spoke to had, for

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various reasons which we identify in Section 4, not used the service at the time of interview. In some cases, people had used more than one guidance centre. In the following table there are more interviews shown by guidance centre than the total number of people interviewed who had used the service. This is because some people used more than one guidance centre.

Institution	Men	Women	Total
Airedale and Wharfedale College	6	4	10
East Leeds Guidance Centre	1		1
Jacob Kramer College	1		1
Job Training Services		1	1
Leeds College of Technology	1	1	2
Leeds Metropolitan University	2	3	5
Opportunities Centre	8	5	13
Park Lane College	3	3	6
South Leeds Guidance Centre	32	39	71
Thomas Danby College	3	2	5
University of Leeds	1		1
Totals	**58**	**58**	**116**

Table 1: Breakdown of interviews by centre and gender

Angela, Leeds 16

Angela, 21, has been at home with two children for a few years. 'Now, I've got one at play school and my husband helps with the other. It means I was able to do something, at least on a part time basis.'

She rang Park Lane College and arranged for a Gateway interview. She was interested in an access course, but had no fixed ideas. 'I started doing maths, history and psychology GCSEs at Park lane. In the future I'd like to go to university and do a PGCE course to get into teaching. It's brilliant! A really good scheme.

3. Where people heard about 'Gateway'

We asked people where they had heard of 'Gateway': was it through 'formal' channels such as the Job Centre, or through advertising, or through informal networks of friends and neighbours?

Derek, Leeds 11

Derek, 47, had been in prison and when he came out was unemployed. 'I was doing nothing and had no ambitions. But I wanted to do something, and when I was inside it occurred to me that I could do some counselling work.'

A leaflet about Gateway came through his letterbox. 'This stimulated me into action; I probably wouldn't have done anything otherwise.'

Derek saw Rob at Tunstall Road - 'he took time to talk to me'. From the discussions with Rob, Derek has signed up for a basic counselling skills course at Burton Road Training Centre. He is also interested in doing a course to improve his writing skills. 'A very good scheme. I wish we had it a few years ago; I've told other people to get themselves down there!'

Sources of information about Gateway varied during the period of the project depending on particular initiatives taken by the TEC and providers to promote the service. By far the biggest initial tranche of 'recruits' came from outreach work carried out by the South Leeds staff. Also, in the early stages of Gateway, a substantial number of people responded to advertisements in the local press, including the local free paper. A number of people had the service recommended by friends or relatives. In addition, a growing number, during the survey, were recommended by the local Job Centre. In at least one case, involving a person using Guiseley Job Centre, attendance at a Gateway interview was compulsory. In the later stages of the survey a large number of people used the Free Phone service after seeing a large advertisement in the *Yorkshire Evening Post*.

Very few people responded to leaflets dropped through the letterbox, although this does not necessarily invalidate that particular approach. Many people may have had a leaflet through their letterbox and not responded immediately, but could have been 'softened up' when approached in the street or through community centre publicity. No-one said that they were directly attracted to Gateway by the advertising with Yorkshire Rider buses, but again the effect may have been subliminal!

The publicity bus in South Leeds attracted a number of recruits to 'Gateway', and appears to have been a resource well used.

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Anne, Headingley

Anne is unemployed and has been doing courses in Teaching English as a Foreign Language and also computing at a local training centre. She heard about Gateway at the centre. She was hoping to do a BA in English and philosophy but wasn't sure of the route. 'I used the freephone and I got a pack. I rang Leeds Metropolitan University and arranged to see them. I chose there because I knew of it, and it was easy enough to reach. Since I wanted to do a degree it was the obvious place to go.'

She found the facilities good, and the staff friendly. She is now doing English A Level at Park Lane, and 'Introduction to Philosophy' at LMU as part of Open Learning. In February she started a Politics course. 'It was very good. During the interview the guidance worker rang up a colleague to arrange to have one of my essays in philosophy evaluated.'

Anne wants more information on grants but is optimistic about being able to achieve her ambition of doing a degree 'as an end in itself'. She has already recommended Gateway to her neighbour.

Rosemary, Beeston

Rosemary, 35, has been at home looking after the kids 'and doing the allotment'. She wanted to get into voluntary work, possibly working with children. She had no idea what sort of course she could do, 'that's why I went down'.

A friend mentioned there was an open day at Tunstall Road centre, and she went down. It was her first visit to Tunstall Road, though she knew of its existence. 'I thought it was a small community centre mainly for Asians'. Her reaction to the centre was that it was less 'open' than the publicity suggested: 'it was a bit like a closed community when I went in'. However, her reaction changed when she met a guidance worker and had an initial chat, followed by further support including psychometric testing. 'I've got a very good relationship with my guidance worker. I see Edwina as more like a friend than a 'professional'. She's been really good.'

The pack arrived after her first interview. She found much of it repetitive but not very informative. 'I still feel that I don't know much about it!'. She did find the card helpful. 'It gave me confidence to go into the centre'. She is now planning to do a pre-school play group course, and also a first aid or gardening course. In the long term, she wants to get back into sciences.

'It seems great for people with no qualifications who are looking for a job which is unskilled. It's more difficult for people with qualifications, the jobs aren't there. Finance is also a problem, particularly with young kids who need childcare.'

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Source	
Friend	20
Advertisement in the paper	24
Community Centre	40
Job Centre	18
Job plan workshop, Restart, Job Club	12
Benefits Service	3
Leaflet in the street	7
Leaflet at home	7
Employer	7
Publicity bus	6
College	7
Church	3
Others	12
Total	166

Table Two: Sources of information about Gateway to Learning

Elizabeth, Middleton

'I've been on the dole for nine years, interspersed with various bits and pieces like market research. I wanted some sort of change but I'm still not sure yet what it is..' Liz heard about Gateway through the publicity bus parked at Middleton Circus. She arranged to go down to Tunstall Road and did the Jiig-Cal psychometric test. After that she got the pack and card - 'I'm suspicious of bits of plastic. I thought it was a union card! Seems very formal and 'big brother' stuff'.

At the time we spoke to her Liz was planning to go back to the centre with her completed Jiig-Cal form. 'Talking to you has inspired me to carry on with it!' She added that it's 'a damn good idea to 'go back'. You have a totally different attitude; education was wasted on me when I was younger.'

Commentary

Our survey shows that, during the life of the research, there has been a substantial improvement in the awareness of various bodies as to what Gateway is. This is particularly the case with Job Centres, but also with a growing range of other agencies more peripheral to guidance/training such as youth clubs, community centres, and libraries.

The clearest message is that a combination of consistent outreach work combined with good quality newspaper advertising offers the best means of contacting the current target audience. The exception here is those facing redundancy, where the employer is the key agency, working in liaison with the Recession Task Force.

Jean, Beeston

'I was at home bringing up young kids, and I had a vague ambition to get into professional childminding. I saw the ad in Leeds Weekly News and rang up.' Jean went to Tunstall Road centre a couple of times. 'First it was a general chat, the next time a more detailed discussion. All the possible opportunities were pointed out to me.'

Jean decided to enrol on an NVQ City and Guilds course in childminding at Burton Road Centre. 'Then the problems started. They didn't know I was coming and I had to come back for another interview. The childcare facilities have proved a problem, ironically. There is an hour at lunch when the creche is closed and there are no proper facilities for mums to look after kids.'

'Gateway itself is a good service. I've told two of my friends with young kids, and they've been down. I've also done the confidence building course at Tunstall Road.' 'It's important to be clear about the follow-up; to be sure of childcare and hours and things like that.'

Rabeena, Beeston

'I was at home, near to a breakdown! I was doing nothing. I phoned some of the colleges but they didn't seem very helpful. I wanted to become a beautician but I didn't know how to start.' Rabeena's father suggested she should go down to Tunstall Road. 'I met Edwina and arranged to come back for a proper interview. I wanted general information on courses, so I could do a fulfilling job, maybe go to university.'

'If I hadn't come down to Tunstall Road, I wouldn't have had the confidence to go anywhere else. I wouldn't go into the city centre. The personal contact with Edwina was most important.' 'I had to push myself to get in, coming round the back where the kids were. But I was soon put at ease. Edwina helped me a lot: she helped me make up my own mind. I gave her an idea, and she put it into shape.'

Rabeena is doing an NVQ 1 and 2 Business Administration course and plans to go into higher education later, at LMU, with the Business International project. 'I can see a lot further now. I thought I was too old for the beauty and health business, but I can see now that I'm not. It's possible I may start a business in Pakistan.' 'I would broadcast it from on high! It's been very helpful. It should continue and be nation-wide, open to everyone. There are lots of unemployed people around with nothing to do, and it's ideal for them.'

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4. Why people don't use Gateway to Learning

We asked people whether or not they had used the Gateway to Learning service, and if they had, what particular motivation they had. Forty four (28%) of our respondents had not used the service and we asked them why. Their responses are presented in Table 3 below.

Reasons	
Started a course	8
Group introduction but no follow-up	8
Started a job	7
Going to use it soon	6
Not suitable for me	3
No answer	3
No apparent reason	4
Doing other work (eg business)	2
No-one at the centre when visited	2
No transport	1
Total	**44**

Table 3: Reasons for not using Gateway to Learning

What are the barriers?

The degree of self-confidence shown by Gateway users was very varied, and it is important to be aware of the barriers which appear to be preventing some people from using the service. We would suggest that some non-users may have been more inclined to use the service after talking with us; human contact, in an informal environment, is a major strength of Gateway and we hope our research had some practical effect in encouraging people to take up the service.

We found that many people mentioned their first impressions: did the centre seem welcoming? Was the telephone receptionist friendly and helpful? Many people specifically said how helpful the free phone staff were. Equally, a bad experience at this stage can put people off entirely.

We tried ringing the fifteen guidance centres on the information pack list, and we found a wide range of responses. Only two of the fifteen centres could handle an enquiry immediately. In three cases there was no answer; in other cases there was an answering machine, and in a few other cases the relevant staff were out to lunch (despite advertising the centre being open through lunch). In some cases reception staff were clearly unfamiliar with Gateway to Learning, and were not sure who to contact. In some cases we were promised that someone would ring back - which is only useful if you are on a phone, and not ringing from a call box.

It should be stressed how important it is for people to feel that a guidance centre is welcoming and its staff are relaxed and friendly, whilst being professional in manner. People should be seen in comfortable, and private, surroundings. Providers should not under-estimate the significance of informal pleasantries such as offering a cup of tea. This seemingly insignificant courtesy marks a very sharp distinction from the formality of Job Centres and other government 'schemes' which often seen clinical and formal, and possibly hostile, to people. Furthermore, the fact that Gateway is non-compulsory and free is regarded as a major 'plus' for many people.

5. Why people use Gateway?

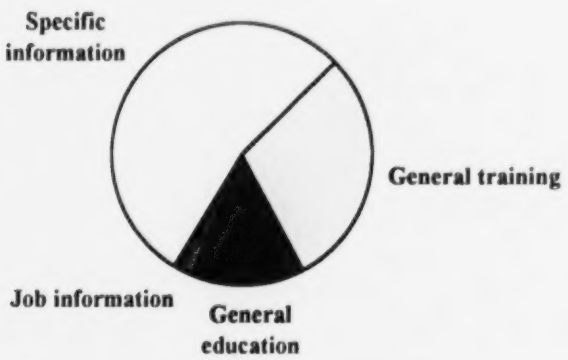
We asked the 110 individuals who had used the service, what were they looking for. For example, was it for a specific course or job, or was it more general guidance, help with a career change, or getting back into the jobs market after bringing up young children? The questionnaire identified several reasons and respondents were asked to tick as appropriate or to amplify.

Linda, Middleton

'I was doing nothing. I had worked as a care assistant and thought it would be good to have a go at computers. A friend told me about Gateway; she had already used it and said it was good. So I thought why not?' The centre at Tunstall Road is handy, it's on a bus route, you don't have to go into town. The creche is very important; my friend has a young child and she couldn't do it without childcare. The canteen facilities helped too. It was a nice friendly atmosphere. The card really made me feel that I had a right to use the place: I am a bit shy, but people made me feel welcome and relaxed.'

The guidance helped Linda find a suitable course. She is doing three sessions a week on computing, and three in literacy skills. She wants to do some part-time computing work after the courses end. 'The people are really helpful and kind. They don't put you down. Brilliant. The Personal Development Plan was also very useful. It helped you keep a record of what you were doing.'

Figure 1: Type of information sought



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Ian, Cottingley

'I've been unemployed for two years; before then I worked at Remploy. Someone came to the hostel where I live and told me about this scheme.'

Ian, who has learning difficulties, went to Tunstall Road and met the guidance staff. 'They were very helpful, and it gave me a broader outlook. I want to do something useful in the community, voluntary. For work, I would like to get something like packing.'

People's specific enquiries included the following:

Childcare and nursery opportunities	8
Media	4
Counselling skills	4
Electronics	5
Word processing	9
Teaching	3
Youth and community work	6
Crafts	2
General office skills	2
Literacy/English	9
Sports	2
Care assistant	1
Radiography	1
Baking and catering	2
Driving instructor	1
Management	1
Business start-up	3
Sales management	1
Access course	1
Careers guidance	3
Police	1
Total	69

Table 4: Specific enquiries through Gateway

community, as counsellors, guidance workers, or community workers. Only a small number wanted guidance on jobs alone; one person was given the wrong impression by a Job Centre that Gateway was a work placement agency. Two others were unwilling to undertake a course, and only wanted employment information.

Paul, Beeston

Paul, 28, was unemployed and was 'looking for help. I just wanted someone to point me in the direction of a job!' He 'stumbled across' Gateway at the Job Centre. They suggested it, but didn't say where he could find it. 'First of all I went to Burton Road, and they sent me on to Tunstall Road. I saw Rob. I've worked in the building trade as a joiner, and I wanted to branch out as self-employed. But I didn't know what I could do.'...'It's important that the centre is local. I don't always have the money to get into the city centre. Everyone at Tunstall Road was great; both receptionists were very helpful.'

Paul did the psychometric tests and was surprised at the results. 'It came up with some unexpected things. I didn't want to go back to building work, and it suggested warehousing management.'...'Once I had seen what I wanted to do, I went down to the Job Centre very frequently, and Rob helped me check the job cards. Much to my surprise a job came up as a warehousing manager, in hifi and public address systems. It was a full time job, and I went down for an interview and got the job! I started this week.'

In addition to getting the job, Paul is also looking at improving his qualifications by doing an NVQ course in warehousing, and also in personnel management.
'I've already recommended Gateway to a friend, and he's been down. It's a very worthwhile scheme and should be there for everybody, and widely publicised. It shouldn't be just short term. Younger people would benefit from it. If they get the sort of service I got, it would be a great help to them.

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Mansel. Cottingley

'I'm 46 and my furniture business collapsed three months ago. Before then, I'd worked as an engineer for Yorkshire Rider and was made redundant there after many years. I have no qualifications. I decided I wanted to be a counsellor, do something person centred. I needed to do relevant courses, like English, Maths, Computing, Counselling Skills.'

'I heard about Gateway in the local paper. I rang up and arranged to go down to Tunstall Road; it's quite easy to get to from here. The guidance was good, but could have had more depth to it. However, it's a very good scheme, and allows people to have access to relevant information relating to their future. I didn't know anything of that two years ago.'

Mansel has started doing GCSE and word processing at Joseph Priestley College. He wants to go onto do an access course to prepare for counselling work.

Ken, Pudsey

Ken was unemployed and looking for a change in direction perhaps doing part time work, possibly with young people. 'The Job Centre suggested Gateway. I rang up and got the pack. 'I'd worked as a photographer in the past. I fancied doing some GCSEs to get into youth work and thought this could help.'

Ken has childminding responsibilities, and the availability of creche facilities at Airedale and Wharfedale was vital: 'It was tremendous. It was a big factor in me deciding to go to that centre.' The guidance staff suggested Ken should get some basic qualifications. 'I'm doing four GCSEs at the college; the support I have had has been wonderful. The Job Centre was also helpful, though my Restart interviewer had never heard of it. They thought it was some sort of outside thing!'

Commentary

Although we drew a distinction in the questionnaire between 'training' and 'education' most people treated the two as interchangeable terms. Thirty eight people had no specific course in mind: they wanted to explore possibilities, rather than opt for a particular training or educational course.

Of those who did have a particular course in mind, no single area emerges as substantially more popular than others, although computing/office skills, electronics, childcare, community and youth work and counselling skills featured most prominently. Other courses people were looking for included business studies, midwifery, catering, and teacher training. Many of those saying they were interested in community and youth work, and in counselling, were from non-professional backgrounds. Many Asian interviewees expressed a strong interest in working with their own

6. Alternatives to 'Gateway'

We asked interviewees whether they would have sought guidance if Gateway had not existed, and where they would have gone. Twenty-four people would not have sought guidance. The 86 individuals who would have sought further information would have done so from the following:

Careers service	9
Job centre	32
Professional agency	7
Library	10
Community centre	19
College or university	23
Friend	1
Probation officer	1
Potential employer	3
TEC	1
Asha Centre	4
Not sure but somewhere	2
Total	**112**

Table 5: Alternatives to Gateway

Commentary

A total of 24 individuals said they would not have known where else to go. We would suggest that the actual figure is probably higher than this as people do not always like to admit that 'they don't know'. Among those who suggested an alternative, the Job Centres were by the far the biggest category, followed by libraries and community centres. Few of the alternative centres named provide actual guidance, but the lessons are that a) Gateway is providing a service that people would not otherwise have access to, and b) that libraries, job centres, community centres, and other 'community' facilities should receive regular information, and briefings, on Gateway, in order to direct people to the appropriate place.

7. The Information Pack

The information pack contains an introductory leaflet about Gateway to Learning, a list of the guidance centres in Leeds, with symbolic representation of their facilities (e.g. childcare, disabled access), a statement of satisfaction covering 'customer care' issues, and the plastic card/voucher. The packs are sent out by the TEC following requests from potential clients via the freephone, or from guidance centres who receive 'walk-in' enquiries.

Diane, Rothwell

Diane is 19 and heard about Gateway from a worker in her local Youth Club. She had been doing a BTEC National in Social Care, and was hoping to get into youth work. She was interested in finding out about further courses or job opportunities. She was interested in doing a Youth and Community Work degree at Leeds Metropolitan University. 'The university said I was too young. They weren't helpful and I felt unwelcome. I was very unsure about what to do next.' She received a pack, and while finding it easy to understand, said she wasn't asked to show her card. ' I didn't see the point of it'.

Diane used two different guidance centres. The first one was Tunstall Road; at that time Thomas Danby, which she used later, was not open as a GTL centre. To her, it was important that the centre was near where she lived, but it was very important that someone had already recommended it. It was also very important for her to see it as a friendly place to go. The fact that the centre provided language support, creche facilities, signing and Braille were all seen as being very important, though none applied to her.

'At Tunstall Road Jane told me about 'Route to Qualification in Youth Work', though this wasn't suitable because it was only one day a week.' Diane later went to Thomas Danby centre, and her experience there helped us to make a direct comparison of her reactions to the two centres.

Both Tunstall Road and Thomas Danby were very friendly and welcoming, though Thomas Danby had more information on the grants system. Both centres allowed her to make her own choice about opportunities, but neither helped her become any more aware of her own skills and needs. In her comments on the two centres, important differences did, however, emerge. 'Tunstall Road spoke to me like an adult, Thomas Danby spoke to me a bit like a student. But it's a lot easier having a centre in college, close at hand.'

Diane finishes her BTEC course in June and has nothing so far planned after that. 'I know more about what jobs are on offer. I want to do a course which is higher than BTEC but lower than degree level. In the future I'd like to run a youth club or well women's centre, or do counselling or work with young offenders.'

Sue, Middleton

Sue, 36, has been at home with a young child for some time. She wanted to do something, perhaps in one of the caring professions, but she had no definite idea, 'perhaps community work or youth work'. She saw the publicity bus at Middleton Circus and met the staff on the bus. She arranged to come down to Tunstall Road for a more detailed chat, in the knowledge that childcare was available. She did not find the pack useful, but had already made contact with Gateway before it arrived. 'The guidance worker, Rob, helped me to rebuild my confidence. I've been out of work for some years and you forget your abilities. It was a long process, and I went back a few times.'

As a result of the guidance Sue is on a 'Return to Learn' course at Park Lane annex in Middleton. She is hoping to do a full time course at Leeds University in Leisure Studies. She also wants to do some youth work as a football coach, and is planning to start a course at Elland Road as part of Adult Training in Sport. 'Childcare is vital for me to achieve my ambitions. I also need to be sure I can get a grant.'

The information pack is an important part of Gateway to Learning. For many people, it is their first introduction to the service, and it could determine whether or not people decide make contact. We asked people to respond to a series of statements indicating whether they: a) strongly disagreed; b) disagreed; c)weren't decided; d) agreed; and e) fully agreed. For the purpose of the following table we collapsed responses into those agreeing and disagreeing, in order to highlight the responses more clearly.

Statement	Number agreeing	Number disagreeing
I already knew which centre I would use before the pack came.	76	26
The pack helped me choose a guidance centre	26	76
The pack was easy to understand	90	12
The card is an important part of the pack	40	62

Table 6: The information pack

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A large number of people had already been recruited, usually by outreach work, before they even got the pack through the post. Clearly in these circumstances the pack would not be seen as very relevant, particularly to those who had a Gateway interview and had no further need of the service.

In the later stages of the survey we saw an increasing number of individuals who were more dependent on the pack: those who had used the Free Phone for information on Gateway, and got the pack as their first introduction to the scheme. The responses here gave grounds for serious concern. A large number found the pack of little help. While the list of providers was helpful, many people said they wanted more information on what each provider was offering. Crucially, many people said that the pack gave inadequate information about what Gateway itself was about. In three cases we were told that the 'Evening Post' advertisement which appeared in January told them more about Gateway than the pack itself! While everyone said they read the pack, we would urge that this is treated with caution. Few people had looked closely at the 'Satisfaction of Service' leaflet within the pack, and we suspect other parts of it were not referred to either. A large number of people did not see the plastic card as being a useful part of the pack, and an even greater number were not sure of its usefulness.

However, a number of people took a different view of the card, and this area is explored more fully in Section 9 of this report.

Joyce, Leeds 12

Joyce is 49 and recently returned to Leeds after living in Guernsey. She has been unemployed for just over a month. She saw an advert in the 'Evening Post' and sent off for the pack, using the freephone. She was hoping to do a course in word processing.

The pack wasn't of much help to her. 'I couldn't see any use in it. It isn't specific enough there's too much general information.' She found the card to be of little use either.
On the basis of information in the pack, she chose the JTP Training centre partly because it was on The Headrow, and partly because it had 'Job Training' in its title. 'The people were very surprised to see me! I was seen by two men who were very friendly and pleasant, but at the end of the day it wasn't much use to me. I was told that they could only help me if I was prepared to pay. They recommended York Place Opportunities Centre but I was told I wasn't in the right category.

The problem was not just in the 'Gateway to Learning' target groups, the criteria for which have been relaxed. The various courses which she could have done were only free for people who were long-term unemployed. 'I'm a bit miffed. I'm one and a half month's unemployed and I want to do something to improve my chances of a job. But I can't get on a free course. I have to wait for another five months. The help I've had was friendly and good quality, but it's the system that's wrong. The ad for Gateway is a bit misleading when it says it's free.'

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Georgina, Brumley

Georgina is 38 and had been working as a medical receptionist. She finished in December 1993 and has been hoping to get into radiography. She heard about Gateway through someone knocking on the door. She sent off for more information and received the pack. She had already tried the careers service in Armley but she says the information she was given was wrong. When the pack arrived she was unclear what Gateway was about. 'The pack didn't say much about what it was about; I was unsure what the card was for. I can't see the point of it.' She arranged to see a guidance counsellor at Airedale and Wharfedale College. ideally, she wanted to use the Pudsey centre but had to go to Horsforth.

'The counsellor, Jill, was brilliant. She was friendly and helpful, and knew what I was looking for. While I was there she rang the College of Health and spoke to the Admissions Tutor.' Georgina is planning to start a Science Foundation Course at the Open University, and O Level Biology. She is hoping to start a Radiography course and possibly one in Reflexology. 'The service should be more widely publicised to older people looking for a change of direction. Most people don't know about it. It's a great scheme which points you in the right direction.'

Mrs L, Leeds 16

Mrs L is 45 and has been unemployed for some time. She has been doing voluntary work, and wanted to do a course in Teaching English as a Foreign Language. She saw the advert in the 'Evening Post' and rang the freephone for a pack. It helped her find a guidance centre, but she regarded the card as 'a waste of time'. She wanted a centre which was near to her, and preferably somewhere she was familiar with.

She chose Leeds College of Technology, and rang up. She found the receptionist 'very condescending'. 'It seemed like GTL was aimed at young people, or people with low intelligence. The actual guidance officer, while 'very nice' was not aware of Gateway to Learning. 'She only knew about what was going on in her college.' The officer suggested the 7350 Teacher Training course at the college, but this was full. In the end, she found details of a course in TEFL at Park Lane through her own inquiries at the local library. 'I'm sure GTL is good for some people, but I didn't get much out of it.'

Quotes:

As the pack and the card are among the main areas of investigation we have expanded on people's views with some quotes from this section of the interviews. We have tried to be balanced in our use of quotes: the fact is that very few people were positive about the pack.

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'The pack doesn't give enough information about the different centres, though it's useful in some ways. The plastic card isn't much use; my life is full of plastic!'
Iain (South Leeds Centre)

'There was no concrete information in it. The centre took note of my card number, but it didn't help me. It just seemed a bit bureaucratic. For their benefit, not mine.'
John (Leeds College of Technology)

'I found it a bit repetitive, but at least it gave me information on where else I could go. It also made me feel it was an ongoing thing.'
Rosemary, (South Leeds)

'It wasn't useful: there's nothing in it! The little card seemed a waste of time. The advert in the Evening Post told me more about Gateway to Learning. When I opened the pack I was disappointed; it didn't make it any more real.'
Brenda (not used service yet)

'It wasn't very useful; I don't know what the card's for. Maybe people will ask me to show it somewhere. The phone numbers in the pack were useful though: I used that part of it. Forget the rest.'
Stephen, (Opportunities Centre)

'I wanted more information on what Gateway was about, and what each centre provided.'
Richard (Seacroft)

Commentary

What is very clear is that many people are dissatisfied with the pack. They want more information on what 'Gateway' is all about, perhaps using some of the material which appeared in the Evening Post advertisement. More information on what each centre provides would also be of help. Adult guidance is not a simple concept, and many people were confused by the publicity, thinking the service was about training provision, rather than guidance. This could be spelt out more strongly through case studies. It may be appropriate for each guidance centre to explain 'what they are' - to market themselves and show who they are aiming at - and for this to appear instead of the symbols.

It would be useful, in cases where potential Gateway clients are seen by providers before receiving the pack, for them to be shown a copy of the pack and to have it explained to them. Ideally, it would make sense for people to be given a pack and card at the first point of contact.

8. Choice of guidance centre

An important part of Gateway is the idea of 'opening up' guidance services by giving people access to a much wider market of guidance providers. Accordingly, we were interested to see what reasons people had in choosing a particular centre.

We presented people with a list of reasons for choosing a particular centre, and asked them to rank them on a five-point scale.

Reason for choice of centre	Very important	Important	Quite important	Less important	Not important at all
The centre was the nearest and most convenient to me	56	20	10	9	8
I already knew about the facilities there	15	26	3	27	32
A friend recommended the centre	11	12	1	26	52
Someone else recommended the centre	19	13	2	23	46
The centre seemed accessible and friendly	17	26	2	19	37

Table 7: Reason for choice of centre

Where facilities were given as a reason for choice, they are shown in Table 8.

Our original assumption was that most people would choose a guidance centre on the basis of the pack. In reality, this has not been the case, and a large proportion of people were recruited through outreach work, particularly in South Leeds. In other cases, such as the Opportunities Centre, people dropped in to what was seen as a city centre resource facility, rather than a 'Gateway to Learning' centre. However, this part of the questionnaire is important in indicating what people view as important features of a guidance centre. In only a very few cases did the pack, on its own, provide the means for people to make informed choices of centre.

Facilities as reason for choice	Very important	Important	Quite important	Less important	Not important at all
The centre had language facilities	7	0	1	2	0
The centre had creche facilities	22	0	1	2	0
Signing and brailling was available	1	1	2	1	0
All the above facilities are important, although not necessarily for me	19	11	1	2	0

Table 8: Importance of guidance centre facilities

The overwhelming majority of people ranked convenience as the most important reason for their choice of guidance centre. Others opted for places which they were familiar with, which also usually meant the centres nearest to them. Many ranked accessibility and friendliness as significant, but this might be a desirable attribute rather than a reason to choose a particular centre. A substantial number of people said that a centre should be on a good bus route and that more than one change of bus was expensive and discouraged journeys. Having somewhere local was clearly important to many, and six respondents said they would not travel to the city centre. These were mostly Asian women. A large number of people identified the availability of language support, creche, signing and braille as being very important, though not necessarily for themselves. People viewed these facilities as being important and signifying that the centre was 'user friendly'. Twenty-two women said that the childcare facilities at a guidance centre were crucial. Seven Asian interviewees said that language support was important.

Paul, Guiseley

Paul is 23 and has been out of work for a year. He worked at Harry Ramsden's chip shop and was made redundant. 'I wasn't sure what to do: possibly bakery. I was given a leaflet at the Job Centre and I rang up the freephone. I got the pack but I couldn't understand what it was all about. I rang Airedale and Wharfedale because it was the nearest place to me, and was on a bus route. 'The people were very helpful but I could have done with more information. I'm still not sure where I'm going but I feel more self-confident and more aware of courses that are on offer. I was in a dead end before, and didn't know where to turn.'

Sue, Leeds 11

Sue is 33 and has been working part-time in catering. She had no long-term ambitions, but wanted a move from catering. She saw an advert for 'Gateway to Learning' in the window of Tunstall Road community centre and called in for more information. She asked about general information on educational courses. The pack arrived after her first interview, so little of it seemed relevant. She wasn't sure what the card was for, and didn't use it.

She felt comfortable using Tunstall Road centre because she was familiar with the centre. She has been for guidance three times, which included psychometric testing. 'I know what I want to do now. I want to work with children or old people, perhaps as a special needs teacher.' She feels more self confident, and more aware of her own skills and personal qualities. 'I've never gone anywhere where I've felt so comfortable. The people at Tunstall Road are easy to deal with and very flexible.'

Marlene, Leeds 11

Marlene is 47 and had been working for ASDA. She was made redundant and heard about 'Gateway' through enquiries at her local library. They sent off for a Gateway pack for her. The pack helped her choose a local centre, Tunstall Road. She was interested in opportunities to become a care assistant. The card was seen as useful in giving her confidence and a feeling that she had a right to use the service. The people at the centre were 'very, very good'.

She was advised that there were courses for Care Assistants which included work placements. She has started an initial six month course but is not entirely satisfied. 'Gateway is very good. But the actual course is not well organised. I wanted to get out of being at home all day; if everyone was as helpful as Wayne it would be great.'

In the questionnaire, we asked people which would be their second choice of centre. Eight responded: 'somewhere in the city centre'. In other cases, particular centres were mentioned. These included Opportunities Centre (3), Leeds Metropolitan University (4), Park Lane (3), University of Leeds(1).

Three people said they would go to the Asha Centre, a local training and educational centre for Asian women, as their second choice, two mentioned Burton Road training centre, and four said the nearest Job Centre. Two people said they would use the Peel Street Centre in Morley. Two people said they would find a private guidance agency.

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Quotes

The following quotes illustrate clients' perceptions of guidance centres and some of the reasons for choosing them.

'It's nice to have somewhere near where you live. I don't always have the money to get into the city centre.'
Paul, Beeston

'There's a good bus service down to Tunstall Road centre: that's really important. As well as that, there's a creche. I couldn't have done anything without that.'
Liz, Middleton

'The centre (Tunstall Road) is convenient, but I was a bit put off by its outside appearance. I thought it was an Asian centre. I wasn't sure it was for me! It was fine once I got in, and everyone was very friendly. I didn't want to go into the city centre; some of the places are in dodgy areas and I'd feel nervous. I'm not sure where the colleges are'
Jan, Beeston

'The most important reason was the creche, and it had been recommended to me by a woman in Morley Job Centre.'
Eileen, Morley

'I phoned up the centre (Airedale and Wharfedale) and they sounded very friendly and helpful it seemed like they had time for me! I wanted a particular course, and it didn't matter how far I had to go to get the right information.'
Jill, Leeds 8.

'I wanted somewhere that provided the right service for what I wanted; being in the city centre made it easy to get to (Park Lane).
Jean, Leeds 16.

'There's no way I would go into the city centre! It has to be near home.'
Rabeena, Beeston

Commentary

There are several different audiences served by Gateway in Leeds, and these have different needs from guidance centres. The first is the category of people served mainly, though not entirely, by the South Leeds centre, particularly long term unemployed. They need a centre which is local, and which, if possible, is accessible without paying for transport. At the very least, it should be on a bus route. The second category is a mixture of people, including the long-term unemployed, some of whom could be graduates or professionals or people with very few skills

and qualifications. A city centre facility is ideal because they know the city and it is easily reached by public transport. This group tends to be disproportionately male.

The final group is those individuals who have more specific needs, who want to find a centre which is suited to their particular requirements for a certain course or course options. In some cases they have their own transport, though not in every case. Having a 'specialist' centre which is on a bus or train route is still important. In these cases, it is particularly important that people can make informed choices of what each provider of guidance can offer.

9. The Gateway card

We received some very strong reactions to this section of the questionnaire. We asked more detailed questions about the card/voucher compared with the previous section, where we asked a general question about the card. We presented people with statements to which they were asked to respond.

The statements were:

1. The Gateway to Learning card helped give me confidence in choosing a guidance centre.
2. I wasn't sure what the card was for.
3. The card made me feel that I have a right to use the guidance centre.
4. If the card was shown to give you £40-worth of guidance, equivalent to one interview, more people would use it.

104 individuals responded to this part of the interview..

Fifteen people felt that the card had given them confidence in choosing a guidance centre, and no less than 73 people were not sure what it was for. Given that people do not always like to admit that they 'don't know' about something, this is very high.

However, 49 people felt the card gave them a feeling that they had a right to use a guidance centre. A larger number felt that it didn't make any difference. It is noteworthy that a large proportion of Asian respondents agreed that the card gave them this sense of right.

The statement about placing a monetary value on the card led to some interesting responses. Clearly, everyone who had used the service had done so <u>without</u> a monetary value on their card, so they were expressing an opinion about other people's motivation. Responses were very evenly balanced, with 41 people saying they thought more people would use the service, 26 individuals who disagreed, and 36 who simply didn't know. Some thought placing a monetary value might put people off. 'What happens after the first interview?' several people asked.

Ian, Leeds 15

Ian is 29 and had spent four years as a holiday representative. Before that he had been at college. 'My next door neighbour works at Tunstall Road, and she told me about it. I wanted general information; I wasn't sure what I wanted.' The pack and card were of use. Ian has since used other guidance centres and the card helped him feel he had a right to use them. 'I did the JiigCal and it came up with various options. I've applied to do a postgraduate course in Information Studies at Leeds Met and the JiigCal definitely helped me in making the final decision. It's a helpful service. I got what I wanted out of it.'

Mr A, Leeds 11

Mr A is 25 and originally came from Pakistan. Before using the centre at Tunstall Road he had been unemployed for some time. His father had been an interpreter, and this was the area of work he wanted to get into. He also wanted to do a course in Business Administration. 'The guidance helped me to find what I wanted. I already knew what I wanted to do, but didn't know how to go about getting on a course.' He is starting an NVQ Level 1/2 course in Business Administration shortly.

He found the card to be important. 'Some people are proud to have the card. It helps to give them an identity.' He agreed that it gave him a feeling that he had a right to use the guidance centre, and he also stressed that it was important for people's future development, rather than any monetary value.

Brenda, Chapel Allerton

Brenda is 35 and spent much of her working life in the banking industry. She left and worked as a market researcher on a casual basis. 'I saw the ad in the Evening Post and rang up for a pack. I was interested in doing bookkeeping. I needed something that I could do from home. The person at the Phone Line mentioned Park Lane, and gave me a contact name. I didn't find the card much use. Why bother if it's only valid a couple of months? The pack told me no more about Gateway to Learning than the advert. In fact the advert was better. The pack doesn't make it sound any more real.' Brenda hasn't used the service yet, but she intends to do soon. She found the person on the Phone Line very helpful, but said the card was of no use.

Andrew, Farsley

Andrew is 43 and is unemployed. He is hoping to start his own business, and saw the ad for Gateway in the 'Evening Post'. He used the freephone and got a pack. 'The card seemed a bit childish. What's the point of it? It's just a bit of plastic. The wording on the card is confusing.'

'I found it very vague on what Gateway was. The advert was more useful. However, the directory was helpful, and I rang Airedale and Wharfedale. I arranged to see Chris Slack, and he was fantastic. Based on what information I was given at Airedale and Wharfedale I'm looking round at various courses on business development. The service was very good, though other places like the Job Centre at Pudsey were no help at all.'

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Anne Marie, Otley

Anne is 40 and has been unemployed. She heard about Gateway 'some time ago' but did nothing about it. 'It was just another name, like the TEC'. She had been working as a supply teacher but had health problems, so she gave up her job. She contacted LMU for advice and they referred her to Airedale and Wharfedale. She rang the Pudsey centre but they were very vague and 'a bit offhand'. 'Getting through to Airedale and Wharfedale was difficult. In the end, I contacted someone I knew at the Horsforth site. I then got hold of someone in the Gateway service and arranged an interview. I was told to bring my card with me, but I'm not impressed by it.'

'I said I was interested in literacy teaching, but they treated me as though it was me that needed the literacy tuition. The room where I was seen was used as a thoroughfare. It wasn't personal enough. I found it a bit disappointing. It felt like 'why are you here?'. I got an appointment at Park Lane and they were good and welcoming. They seemed more positive and keyed into Gateway to Learning.'

Quotes

The following quotes serve as 'snapshot' comments on aspects of the card.

'I'm suspicious about bits of plastic! It all seems a bit like 'big brother'.'
Liz, Middleton

'The card makes you feel like you are a member of something. It's a good idea. I don't think you should put a monetary value on the card. It could be confusing and might mean that people only use it once.'
Abu, Beeston

The card did give me confidence in using the service, but I don't like the money idea on the card. I now feel that my guidance counsellor is like a friend, rather than a remote professional. Bringing money into it could weaken that.'
Rosemary, Beeston

'I already felt I had a right to use the service, so why should a card make any difference? I'm totally disinterested in the little card. Maybe some more people might use it if you put some monetary value on it.'
Jill, Leeds 8

'Putting a cash value on the card may help people realise the value of the guidance they're getting'.
George, Headingley

10. Coming back for more

We asked interviewees how many times they had used the service, and why, if used more than once, they had 'come back for more'. The following figures are out of a total of 104.

A total of 41 interviewees had used Gateway more than once. In nearly every case this was because people wanted more detailed guidance, possibly involving psychometric testing. We found very few examples of 'guidance junkies'! One client, who had been to Tunstall Road eight times, may have fallen into this category, though there were genuine issues relating to personal problems. Gateway counselling was part of a wider process of overcoming them

It seemed normal and accepted, by clients and providers, for people to use the service three times at least. A total of 31 people had used the service twice, and a further four had used more than one guidance centre.
In two cases people were not satisfied with the original guidance and went to a different centre.

Two people could not make contact with their local guidance centre, and eventually went to another centre.

Commentary

It seems important that people not only have the right, but are, in appropriate circumstances, positively encouraged to use Gateway to Learning as often as necessary, and this should clearly form part of the 'contract' between provider and client. There may be isolated cases where people are using the service repeatedly for non-guidance-related purposes, and it should be up to the discretion of the provider to decide whether to refer them to another agency. What came across in several interviews was that people valued having the option to go back, and that guidance was a process, rather than a one-off event. In a number of cases we were struck by the very positive personal bonds between provider and client. In many cases people referred to their guidance counsellor by their first names, and said that they had told friends to 'go down and see Fred/Jill'. This degree of informality and openness is an important feature of the service, and clients value it very highly.

11. The Guidance centre

We asked people to respond to statements about their general impressions of the particular centre they used, using a five-point scale. People's impressions of a centre - from making contact by phone or through reception, through to actual guidance counselling - are of great importance in presenting Gateway as a high quality, but friendly and informal, service.

The statements were:

1. The centre was friendly and welcoming.
2. The people I met understood my needs.
3. The centre had all the facilities it advertised in the pack.

The overwhelming majority of people we saw either agreed or fully agreed with the statement that the centre was friendly and welcoming. Only five people disagreed, and in each of these cases special circumstances may have pertained.

In one case, a client was interviewed in what she described as 'a corridor' with several interruptions and distractions. In another case, an Asian woman found the centre intimidating because of the presence of (Asian) men in the centre. One person found the entrance area to the guidance centre to be off-putting and unfriendly.

Azra, Beeston

Azra was self-employed up to October 1992 and has since been at home. She wanted to do some sort of course that could get her into a better job, possibly in community work, if possible with the Asian community.

She heard about Gateway through the ad in 'Leeds Weekly News' and also by calling into Tunstall Road centre. She has also done assertiveness training and confidence building at the centre. The centre is near to where she lives and this is a major help. 'I don't have to depend on anyone bringing me'.

As a result of the guidance, Azra is doing a one year bilingual training course at Park Lane, which includes GCSEs, computer skills, counselling and study skills, and work placement. For the future, she is more determined to do community work 'possibly counselling with Asian women. It helps when you understand their needs and their culture'.

'I feel as though I'm on the right path. It's difficult to get back into things. Making the first move is the most difficult. First impressions are important. People are there who will provide support and guidance, and help you to go further.'

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Liz, Middleton

Liz is 22 and has been at home with her young daughter 'going slowly insane!'. 'I wanted to go back to college but I was worried about childcare. I didn't know what was available, though I've always been interested in psychology.'

She heard about Gateway through an ad in the 'Leeds Weekly News'. There was an open day at Tunstall Road so she went down to see what was on offer. She had a brief chat with a guidance worker and received a pack. The card 'made me feel like I belonged there'. She went back to Tunstall Road for more in-depth guidance. 'It's on a bus route so it's easy to get there. The creche facilities were good. It would be no good for me without that.'

She found the information she needed: 'Everyone was very helpful; I was told what courses were available.'

Liz is starting a Mature Access Course at Park Lane, and then hopes to go on to a psychology degree course at Leeds University. Eventually, she wants to be a professional psychologist, possibly in social services.

For the future, she says she needs financial support to do her course, and the certainty that childcare is available. She has already recommended Gateway to her friend and to her boyfriend's mother. 'I'm glad Gateway's there. If it wasn't I'd be stuck at home doing nothing. It's given me the opportunity to do what I always wanted to do.'

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12. The Guidance

We were interested in people's feelings about the actual guidance they received, whether or not they felt the guidance was impartial, and also whether or not the guidance helped them to become more aware of their own abilities and skills.

We asked people to respond on a five point scale to the following statements:

1. The guidance helped me make my own choice about jobs, education, and training opportunities.
2. The guidance session helped me to become more aware of my abilities, skills, and needs.
3. The guidance left me free to choose where I wanted to go.

We analysed these results on a centre-by-centre basis. It should be noted that these figures, and those below where a centre-based analysis is used, should be treated with caution since the nature of the client base varies substantially between different centres. Tunstall Road tends to have a more homogeneous client base than, say, the Opportunities Centre. This is further complicated by the nature of the survey, whereby a large number of Tunstall Road clients were seen, but only small numbers from elsewhere (for example, none from the Opportunities Centre and five from Leeds Metropolitan University). These figures would, at the early stages of our research, have been proportionate to the number of clients using each centre. However, by March 1994, this was no longer the case as Gateway provision had become better established at various centres in Leeds.

A total of 100 interviewees responded to some or all of the questions. Out of these, only 11 people felt that the guidance had not helped them to make their own choice on jobs, education or training. This breaks down to Tunstall Road (5), Park Lane (1), Leeds Metropolitan University (1), Opportunities Centre (3) and Thomas Danby (1). Five were not sure, all from Tunstall Road. A total of 84 said the guidance was helpful in making choices, based on figures for Tunstall Road (53), Opportunities Centre (8), Thomas Danby (2), LCT (2), University (1), LMU (5), JTS (1), Jacob Kramer (1), Park Lane (1).

The next statement, which asked if guidance helped individuals become more aware of their own skills and needs, should be treated with some caution. Several Gateway clients used the service for a very simple end such as information on a specific course, etc. In other words, a full guidance service was not appropriate, and it is thus irrelevant to ask people if they become more aware of their skills and needs, or, as we note later, whether their confidence was boosted. Nonetheless, 63 people did find that guidance made them more aware of their 'skills, abilities and needs'. This breaks down to Tunstall Road (47), Park Lane (3), Airedale and Wharfedale (5), University (1), Leeds Metropolitan University (2), Leeds College of Technology (1), Jacob Kramer College (1), and the Opportunities Centre (3).

The overwhelming majority of people (85%) who responded to the question on whether the guidance left them free to choose options responded in the affirmative. Only 9% responded negatively and 6% were not sure.

Noel, Leeds 11

Noel, 47, has been out of work for some time, after working as a security officer. He heard about Gateway because Rob Wood from Tunstall Road gave him a leaflet in the street.

He has used the service twice and is still in the process of getting guidance and identifying where he wants to go in the future. 'They've still not got enough out of me! I'm thinking of possible hospital work, like portering. The service is very informative. It's better than the Job Club which is very speculative. Everyone is very friendly and helpful. It gives you an idea of what you can do.'

Commentary

There were only a small number of instances where we formed the impression that people were being guided in a direction in which they did not necessarily want to go. There was some evidence that providers were still favouring their own training and educational provision, and it is certainly not easy for guidance officers in a particular centre to be totally objective. They were inevitably most familiar with their own provision, especially in the early stages of Gateway. In several cases people went along to a guidance centre expecting to be told what the particular provision was at that centre, rather than any others. The concept of an 'open market' in guidance, with objective advice, is quite difficult to achieve in practice. The more providers become familiar with Gateway, the more it should become the norm for a provider to tell clients, for example, that 'here is the range of courses on offer in the area you are interested in... we run this particular course, but colleges X and Y do something similar.'

Some clients deliberately chose a centre which they saw as being 'objective', ie which did not offer any courses of their own, in order to get a full picture of what was on offer in Leeds.

The results of the question about whether Gateway helped people become more aware of their skills and needs should be welcomed by Gateway agencies. A large number of people clearly feel that they are becoming more self-aware as a result of guidance, particularly people with few if any educational or professional qualifications.

13. Before and after Guidance

We asked questions about what people were doing before they sought guidance, and what they were now doing, or planning to do in the near future. We wanted to see if the guidance in any way changed people's ambitions, and also, on a very practical level, to see whether people progressed to some form of course, work, or other activity as a result of the guidance. However, it must be stressed that, for a large number of people, it is wrong to expect instant results from one guidance interview. The actual interview is often part of a process by which people develop self-confidence and a clear idea of where they want to go in their lives. We were therefore surprised at how many people did took up courses as a direct result of their Gateway interview. It is impossible to tabulate most of these results, but we have used extensive quotes and case studies to illustrate the main findings.

Gloria, Leeds 11

Gloria was unemployed, 'doing nothing'. She had previously done clerical work and had RSA 1 and 2 Typing, CLAIT 1 and RSA word processing 1. The lack of childcare was a major barrier. She saw publicity for Gateway at the Coop, and made an appointment. She was interested in courses on information technology and advanced word processing.

'I just wanted practical information and that's what I got. I'm now doing CLAIT 2 and WP 2 at Burton Road. It helped me find the information I wanted; I couldn't get it anywhere else. I'm sure other people would find it useful. I'd use the creche facilities if the kids were younger; it's vital for mums with young kids. The courses have helped get me out of the house and I'm meeting new people. It shows you've been doing something when you see prospective employers.'

George, Headingley

George, 26, had recently graduated with a BA in philosophy. He wants to do a follow-on course, possibly an MSC, or PGCE starting in September 1994. He signed on when he finished his degree, and had a Restart interview which suggested Gateway to Learning. He got a pack through the post and chose the university guidance centre. He found the card and pack useful. The card made him feel like he had a right to use the service free of charge.

He took the psychometric test, and found the service at the university helpful. 'It's a gradual thinking process. It helps to talk through the various options with someone who is professionally trained. It's a very good idea opening up careers guidance for free.'

Out of the total sample of 110 who had used the service, we found that 89 people were doing something different following their guidance session. This reflects well on the quality of guidance that people were given, and on the enthusiasm of the clients themselves to take up opportunities. Of the 31 who are not doing anything different, several are still using the guidance service and others are actively seeking new opportunities. Thirteen people said they were still looking at options and opportunities.

The 89 individuals who are doing something different are not, in every case, involved in a new activity as a direct result of Gateway. It would, however, be fair to say that Gateway has probably been part of the process by which people have taken up new opportunities recently. We estimate that at least three-quarters of those doing something different have taken up opportunities in the short term as a direct result of Gateway to Learning.

Commentary

An important outcome of guidance has been the change in some individuals' own perceived needs. Gateway to Learning has clearly been invaluable to many people who are 'looking for a change of direction' but don't know where to go for support. A Gateway interview may not in itself lead to an immediate outcome but it can give people the confidence to think that 'I don't have to do this all my life!'.

Another important feature of Gateway for some people we interviewed was the availability of childcare at the interview itself, and the information that many colleges and training centres had facilities for children. A number of mothers assumed that, until their children were much older, they were stuck at home. For several, there was a real sense of liberation or 'empowerment' in knowing that they had options in their lives beyond being at home all the time.

Several of these cases are referred to in in the case studies.

14. Clients' feelings after guidance

Most people reported very positive feelings following their guidance session, though there were some less than positive experiences, such as John's, below.

John, Leeds 15

John is 49 and has worked in the transport industry, as a manager and then as a consultant, for most of his life. His consultancy work suffered in the last few years during the recession and he sought help to improve his career chances. He had already tried the Careers Service, Job Centre, and professional guidance agencies. 'They weren't much help. I did the psychometric tests and that confirmed I was in the right area of work.' He contacted Leeds TEC who told him about Gateway and suggested the Opportunities Centre.

He went to the Centre which referred him to a training and business centre. 'There could have been more detailed guidance. It was mainly motivational. I'm already motivated!' John had a sense that he wasn't in the right place. 'It felt like people were saying 'what are you doing here?' The centre seemed more for unskilled and semiskilled people, rather than everyone, including managerial backgrounds.' The pack and card arrived after his interview. 'The card didn't mean much. It was all a bit vague. I carry it around with me though.'

John's experience with the training and business centre has been very mixed. 'They don't seem to be equipped with labour market information; they aren't going out to industry to see what they want. It's the old 'tick' syndrome, the numbers game. I'm one of their numbers. It seems mainly aimed at young people with low level skills, not for older, more 'difficult' people like me!'

John was sent to Sidestep, a community film and photography project, on a voluntary basis. He has been helping Sidestep with a marketing strategy and fund raising, under the Community Action programme. 'People in my category, professional and managerial, aren't being catered for. The people at the training centre are well-meaning but not equipped for the likes of me. There should be some sort of umbrella organisation for people in my position. I know there's the executive job clubs but they are not much use. Surely there must be a sizeable market for guidance of people in managerial and professional positions who have lost their way. There must be hundreds from British Coal alone.'

People were asked three questions about how they felt now, after the guidance. We wanted to see whether the service had improved people's confidence, and helped them to become more aware of their abilities and potential. We broke the responses down on a centre-by-centre basis, but caution in interpreting these results is needed. In several cases people had very precise enquiries and were looking for simple information, rather than 'guidance' as such. Thus, if someone disagreed that

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their use of Gateway had made them any more self-confident, we should not necessarily take this as a negative response. On the other hand, it is a positive development for those who did say that the service improved their self-confidence. Several people who had a full guidance interview also said that they were already quite self-confident in the first place.

Responses were ranked on a five-point scale. The actual statements were:

1. I am now more self-confident.
2. I am more aware of my own skills and personal qualities.
3. I am more aware of my educational and employment potential.

a) Self-confidence

A total of 21 people disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were any more self-confident, and 11 were not sure. However, 67 people agreed or fully agreed that they did feel more self confident. This breaks down to Airedale and Wharfedale (6); Park Lane (3); South Leeds (52); Opportunities Centre (3); Leeds Metropolitan University (2); Leeds College of Technology (1).

Graeme, Middleton

'Before Gateway? I was feeling sorry for myself! I'd been six months unemployed and was literally suicidal. If it wasn't for Gateway I'd be dead now. Honest.'

Graeme heard about Gateway through the Job Club, and went to Tunstall Road and saw Polly. 'I'd no idea what I wanted really. We had a chat and I went away and got the pack in the post. The card allows me to go to any training centre in Leeds and use their services free.' 'Tunstall Road is a good place. At Burton Road they treat you like a kid. The service is useful for people in general; it gives you confidence.'

Graeme did the JiigCal - 'some of the things amazed me!'. Graeme is hoping to start as a residential care assistant and then go to college in September. 'I'm going to do an access course and HND Nursing. I wouldn't have thought of doing anything before; if it wasn't for Gateway I wouldn't have had confidence. Recommend it? I already have!'

b) Awareness of own skills and personal qualities

Twenty-one people disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were any more aware of their skills and personal qualities as a result of guidance, and 12 were not sure. A total of 66 agreed or fully agreed that they were more aware after guidance. This breaks down as Airedale and Wharfedale (6); Park Lane (3); South Leeds (50); Thomas Danby (1); Jacob Kramer (1), Leeds Metropolitan University (2); Opportunities Centre (3).

Lionel, Leeds 16

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Lionel is 34 and had been out of work for some months before hearing of Gateway. Previously, he had worked in Sales Engineering. 'People assumed I was too old. I applied for lots of jobs; I was last! But it was other people who had lost me.'

In the end I looked in the phone book, under 'Careers and Training' and saw the Opportunities Centre. I rang them up and arranged to see Mr Forsyth. What I wanted was someone who could guide me through the right doorways. I had vague ideas for re-training; I already have a broad knowledge in sales and technical areas, but I knew I needed keyboard and computing skills.'

Lionel went to the Opportunities Centre, pleased with the encouraging response he had had from the staff. 'The card gave me confidence in knowing that I had somewhere to go; it makes you feel like you want to use the service, and have a right to.' He found the reception area at York Place to be unwelcoming. 'The entrance area is off-putting'. However, the people were helpful and Lionel has started a NVQ Business Administration course. 'I have developed awareness of skills I didn't know I had. I never knew I'd be able to learn to type!'

'The amount of doors opened to me is now much greater. There are lots of avenues. I've got a lot more confidence now.'

c) Awareness of educational and employment potential

Nineteen people disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were any more aware of their educational and employment potential as a result of guidance, and 11 were not sure. Sixty five individuals said they were more aware of their potential. This breaks down as follows: Airedale and Wharfedale (6); Park Lane (3); Opportunities Centre (3); South Leeds (48); Leeds College of Technology (1); Leeds Metropolitan University (1); Thomas Danby (1); Jacob Kramer (1).

Commentary

These are clearly very encouraging results, particularly when one bears in mind that many Gateway clients were not using the service for in-depth guidance, but simply wanted access to information. As we have stressed, those people who responded negatively to the statements about becoming more self-confident or more aware of skills, abilities and education or employment opportunities were not necessarily criticising the guidance which they had received. The most significant figures are for those who responded positively. Gateway has made a difference to many people's self-confidence, their awareness of their own skills and abilities, and their educational and employment potential.

15. Future guidance needs

Eighty eight people said they might need guidance services in the future, and 78 said they would go back to the same place. Only 18 said they definitely did not need further guidance. Some said they might go to a more specialised centre, which included: LeedsUniversity/Leeds Metropolitan University (6); Careers (1); colleges (2); Chamber of Commerce (1) and libraries (1). Four people wanted to go somewhere else, but were not sure where.

When asked what other support, apart from guidance, people needed, eight said they required further information on finance or grants to do courses. Four people specified childcare (and one 'peace and quiet'!). Three people wanted further information on entry requirements for college courses, one needed help with her CV and two wanted 'general support' in getting to college or university.

Commentary

Although many people clearly regard Gateway as a process rather than a 'one off' event, the numbers who are progressing from what may be a non-specialist centre to one with more targeted and specialised facilities seems low. It was clear that many people wanted to stay with the same guidance centre once they had overcome the initial hurdle of 'getting in through the door'. While it will certainly be appropriate for many people to continue the guidance process at the same centre and with the same counsellor, it might be appropriate for other people to be encouraged to move on (eg from Tunstall Road or the Opportunities Centre to Leeds Metropolitan University or the University of Leeds). Several people who had been guided towards a particular college course were still very unsure about the availability of grants and other financial support, including how their benefit would be affected by doing a part-time course.

16. Recommendations and other general comments from users

Most people we spoke to said they would recommend 'Gateway' to friends and neighbours. Several already had. In the South Leeds sample there was a very high level of enthusiasm. When asked how they would tell friends to get in touch, a large number suggested calling in at the centre (as opposed to phoning). This again suggests that a locally-based centre has major benefits.

We also received several general, unprompted, comments from clients, some of which are quoted in the case studies.

'Everyone at Airedale and Wharfedale was very helpful. But I got the impression the person at the college was not being kept informed about what was happening, and the Job Centre knew nothing about it: they described it as 'an outside thing'! There seems an enormous breakdown in communication. The wallet seems a waste of time. I don't know who should fill in what!'
Ken, Pudsey

'It's very helpful. It should continue, and be a nationwide scheme open to everyone. There are lots of unemployed people around with nothing to do.'
Rabeena, Leeds 11

'The centre is handy, and the service is free. The creche is a big help too.'
Jean, Leeds 11

'It's a damn good idea to 'go back' into education. You have a totally different attitude; education was wasted on me! Gateway helped me make the move...'.
Liz, Middleton

'It's given me a broader outlook. I want to be useful in the community. I'm interested in doing some part-time work with voluntary groups.'
Ian, Leeds 11

'I found it very useful. The free creche facilities are a big help, including being able to use the creche when you come down for the interview.'
Sandra, Leeds 11

'If it wasn't for Gateway to Learning I'd be dead now! I came very close...'
G. Leeds 11

'The JiigCal was useful. It confirmed that I was already on the right track. I need more formal training to get where I want to be, and the service is helping me with that.'
Alison, Leeds 16

17. Our recommendations

It is our view that Gateway to Learning is providing a valuable, and valued, service to many people in Leeds. Our recommendations are as follows:

Target groups and markets

While a less rigid approach is now being taken towards 'target groups', it seems important to have a clear idea of whom Gateway is aimed at. We found several distinct markets, but by far the biggest was long-term unemployed people, as a general category. This may appear surprising in view of the considerable resources already directed at this group through various government projects. However, Gateway's informal and non-compulsory nature clearly proved very attractive to many long-term unemployed people. Within this large category, particular consideration needs to be given to people with special needs, including those with learning difficulties and people with professional and managerial skills.

Another important group, for whom we feel inadequate attention is being given, are people in low-paid part-time jobs. In many cases they get little training or support from their employer, and, in many ways, they are in a similar position to many long-term unemployed. Gateway could be extremely helpful to them.

Gateway is proving of assistance to Asian people, though there is a need for more information in Asian languages.

Gateway appeared to be of less use to individual people facing redundancy, for whom co-ordinated support through employers was available. However, Gateway could be of assistance if the service co-ordinated its work with the Recession Task Force and employers.

Recommendation 1

> *Gateway should continue to have long-term unemployed people as its main target group, and the specific needs of groups within this category, including people with learning difficulties, professional and managerial clients, and Asian people should be specifically addressed. The needs of low-paid, possibly part-time, individuals should be catered for.*

Publicity about Gateway

Our research shows that it is important to maintain a flow of information about Gateway. The service is still relatively new and many statutory agencies are unclear about it, as well as potential clients. For the latter, a rolling programme of advertisements in the local press would be desirable, with brief case studies to allow people to identify with existing Gateway users.

Many people are getting information about Gateway through colleges, community centres and Job Centres. We would support the efforts being made to keep staff in such agencies fully briefed on Gateway, with regular flows of information and publicity. A Gateway magazine, aimed at existing and potential users, is suggested in the recommendations related to 'keeping track of users' below.

It might be worth designing a new poster, showing pictures of people who have used the service, backed up by suitable quotes. Finally, we would confirm the value of outreach work. If this is not done, many people who could benefit from Gateway will miss the opportunity; there would be a real danger that people using Gateway could dwindle to those who have the knowledge, skills, and levels of articulacy to seek guidance anyway.

Recommendation 2

> *Gateway needs a regular flow of publicity both for clients and statutory and community agencies in Leeds. Publicity aimed at potential clients should be clear, and allow people to relate to it in terms of their own experience and needs. Outreach work should be an important part of providers' briefs.*

Many people who could be deemed to be most in need will not always respond to a press advertisement or a Job Centre suggestion. Talking to people directly is often the most effective means of contact. This can be achieved by street-corner leafleting, open days at centres, and by a Gateway presence at community events and festivals.

The Information Pack

There are clearly a number of difficulties with the pack arising from clients' comments. Many people told us they found it to be of little use, and some described it as a waste of money. We think it is important that Gateway has a clear, well-produced information pack which people will value and find useful. We are aware of the amount of work and consultation which went into the original pack, but we recommend strongly another approach to marketing. It would be appropriate to involve Gateway clients in this process, together with Gateway providers.

The lesson of the very popular advertisements in the Evening Post is that people like being able to identify with people in a similar position to themselves. A few case studies could usefully form part of the pack material. Information on the guidance centres should also be looked at again. While retaining the principle that every guidance centre should be open to all (acknowledging the special circumstances at South Leeds, which we address below), each centre should be able to make a short statement about what they see as their strong points. At present, people do not have the information they need to make any informed decision about choice of guidance centre.

A review of methods of distributing the pack should be carried out. If someone turns up at a guidance centre, at the very least, they should be shown a pack and told that one will arrive in the post shortly. Aspects of the pack, including the card, should be fully explained. It would be preferable to the client and, we suspect, to the provider for the pack to be given there and then, with the TEC notified that one has been issued.

Recommendation 3

A re-design of the pack is necessary in order to address criticisms that it does not explain adequately what Gateway is about. Gateway users and providers should be involved in a small project group to prepare a re-designed draft.

Recommendation 4

The method of distributing the pack should be re-assessed, so that clients get the information as soon as they make contact with the service, whether by freephone, or by turning up at a guidance centre.

We address the particular problems with the card/voucher below. We think a card of some form should be a part of the pack, but this also needs re-thinking.

The Gateway Card/Voucher

It should be clear from the relevant section of the report that there was considerable confusion about the card. This needs to be addressed as part of a re-evaluation of the information pack.

Despite the very mixed feelings about the card, we are of the view that some form of Gateway card could be beneficial. Enough people found it to be of use to justify its retention in some form. Quite a number of interviewees felt it did give them a sense that they had a 'right' to use a centre. On the other hand, it is worth thinking how the critical comments about the card can be addressed, if at all. To several people it did not appear to mean or say anything to them. Possibly a very short, simple statement on the card about Gateway could help, as well as the person's name, address and Gateway number. The freephone number would also be valuable. We found the expiry date printed on the card deterred some people from making full use of the card, and there was little evidence that putting a monetary value on it would increase usage. The card could become part of a marketing campaign for Gateway, with the card becoming synonymous with being in the 'Gateway club' which gives the holder free access to guidance facilities in Leeds. Seeing Gateway as some sort of city-wide club, with the card as the proof of membership may be a positive step forward for the service.

The above comments are, to an extent, separate from consideration of the 'voucher' aspect of Gateway. Redemption of Gateway 'vouchers' appears to us to be essentially an internal issue so long as the intention is to provide a service free to the user. Presentation of the card is certainly beneficial in enabling quick access of a client's file, though this could be done with the person's name. Seeing the card as being imbued with some semi-mystical quality which supposedly 'empowers' people in an abstract way is not helpful to users of the service, or to providers.

Recommendation 5

The card should be reconsidered as part of a review of the Gateway pack, with the aim of making the card a more tangible part of the service. A small amount of additional information, including a freephone contact, should be on the card. The expiry date should be dispensed with.

The Guidance Centre

People's perceptions of guidance centres is extremely important. Most people chose a centre which was near to them, in a locality which they felt familiar with. Some people were resistant to going into the city centre at all. However, while location and accessibility are important, so is a friendly and welcoming atmosphere at the centre. This is far from being just a responsibility of the guidance counsellor. It is just as important to have friendly and sympathetic reception staff. Usually, these will be the first point of contact. A bad impression on the phone, or having to wait while a receptionist does something else, creates a bad impression. Our experience of ringing round the original fifteen guidance centres was far from being positive. Only two out of fifteen centres were able to deal with an immediate enquiry. The rest either did not answer the phone, replied that 'the person you want is out' or there was an answering machine. A lot of Gateway clients do not have phones, so it is not possible for them to be rung back. If our experience were repeated, it would be reasonable to assume that large numbers of potential Gateway clients were being put off simply because they could not get through to a guidance centre.

The crucial importance of childcare at each guidance centre was confirmed by our research. The availability of Asian language speakers was also important. Whilst very few people we spoke to said that they had problems with physical accessibility, the requirement to have centres which are genuinely accessible is regarded as important by a wide range of clients. This factor, together with childcare and language support, is seen by clients as adding to the user friendly nature of the service.

Recommendation 6

Future development of Gateway centres should aim at providing an even geographical spread around the city, with most attention directed at areas of highest levels of unemployment. Centres should be easily accessible by public transport.

Recommendation 7

Regular reviews of 'customer care' should be made of each guidance centre, both by centres themselves and by the TEC. This should cover times taken to answer the phone, staff skills in customer care and the physical appearance of reception areas and the rooms in which the guidance sessions are held.

Recommendation 8

If a centre advertises itself as being open for a particular period of the day, there should always be someone able to answer calls and make appointments during that period.

Recommendation 9

Childcare facilities should be available at all local guidance centres, and a substantial number of city centre providers. Language support and good access for physically disabled people should be available at key Gateway centres.

for physically disabled people should be available at key Gateway centres.

Guidance provision

We have no strong recommendation to make on the actual guidance provided; to a large extent this is being covered by other agencies who are evaluating the pilot project. However, our impression was that the quality of guidance being given to people was of a high standard and that most people were satisfied with the service they had received. Many people wanted practical information about grants for doing courses and childcare arrangements, which were not fully available at the time of our research. The newly-published guide to grants in Leeds will fill this gap and should be an important part of the service.

Keeping track of clients - and keeping them informed

The initial emphasis of Gateway has been to build up a solid base of clients. Over the coming months it will be important to keep track of people who have used the service, as well as those who have entered the system but not taken up Gateway. Part of the 'club' approach, suggested above, could include a city-wide Gateway magazine, which includes information on different centres, and other related facilities, which could be aimed at existing and potential Gateway members. Some individual follow-up should also be appropriate, and this would depend largely on the judgement of particular providers. Some people will be able to make their own way, whilst others may falter if they do not have a stronger back-up.

Recommendation 10

Resources should be made available for a city-wide Gateway magazine, aimed at existing and potential users.

Recommendation 11

Providers should identify clients who may need follow-up, and on-going support.. This may require staff resources devoted to such client support.

Further copies of this report are available from

Jane Fisher
Department of Adult Continuing Education
University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT

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